

heedless, often mindless, way that, like so many hasty reformations [of nineteenth-century capitalist societies], it creates as many problems as it solves." Corporate capitalism must change because "in its heedless emphasis on economic growth and ever-increasing prosperity, [it] incites ever more unreasonable expectations, in comparison with which the actuality of the real world appears ever more drab and disconcerting."

If *Two Cheers for Capitalism* sounds gloomy, opinionated, and stubborn, then I've conveyed its mood. But it also echoes voices we are hearing elsewhere. Kristol wants us to think smaller and simpler. We should get our social conscience back to basics. We need a comprehensive national health program and should enact one. We need a means of assuring ourselves dignity in old age. He tells us to address directly the problem of the maldistribution of wealth. Enact a tax code that prevents anyone from inheriting more than one million dollars during his lifetime (it's an idea Jefferson and Montesquieu would like). Learn from Europe by instituting children's allowances to sanitize our welfare programs but avoid demeaning and socially divisive qualifying tests. Kristol says our successful social reforms—social security, Medicare, public education—have been "universal." Kristol makes sense about corporate responsibility: Business must learn to explain its behavior to the public, democratize its relations with shareholders, and regulate its profits. Everything is more complicated than it seems, even to Kristol. Technology has altered our lives. Political and economic systems survive at the mercy of their physical environments.

While Kristol's essays merit quiet celebration, they leave much unsaid. Our capitalistic success rose from our treasure of natural resources and a growing population. Now, U.S. capitalism is devouring our own and the world's resources. In another decade, 8 of the 10 minerals necessary to an industrial society will probably be depleted in this country. Corporate capitalism could consume itself to death. Our excessive combustion of fossil fuels is turning our rain to acid—10 to 100 times more acidic than a decade ago. Acid rain is rendering our freshwater fish sterile and stunting the growth of our trees and our plant food supply. Kristol's attack on environmentalists diminishes him. He calls the Environmental Protection Agency "a major obstacle to the redevelopment of the inner city" and the environmentalist movement "an exer-

cise in ideological fanaticism."

Kristol masters in economics, history, and polemics, but he misses in science and technology. He fingers policy, not structure. Yet structure breeds policy. Still, I like these essays because Irving Kristol knows a great deal. He makes us think about questions that won't go away: What is a good life? What is the compact between each of us and the rest of society? ●

*Webster Schott is a corporate executive and literary journalist.*

## Critic, Friend, and Teacher

**The Eye of the Story:  
Selected Essays and Reviews**

by Eudora Welty

Random House, 320 pp., \$10

Reviewed by Carole Cook

WITHOUT ITS STORYTELLERS, any nation would be reduced to the moral equivalent of a trading post, and after two generations of spinning the tales that have literally created the Delta country and the Natchez Trace (but not Yoknapatawpha County, which is another world also unto itself) for us outsiders—shy for one reason or another of Mississippi—it is sensible and honorable to regard Eudora Welty as a great national resource.

An ordinate amount of claptrap has been written about Eudora Welty. Critics and reviewers have picked over her work with a fussiness or, perhaps even worse, a glib glossiness. As for the burgeoning field of Welty scholars, her response has been to reiterate quietly that while she respects the difficulty of the work of the analyst, she cannot corroborate his schematic and symbolic interpretations of her stories—which are just that: stories.

But don't think for a minute that this is typical artistic disingenuousness on Welty's part. Nothing, let us hasten to say, is typical about Eudora Welty, even if she has sometimes found it convenient to make it seem that way. The introduction to her snapshot album of depression-era Mississippi, *One Time, One Place*, helps explain why her home state has been her locale. No professional photographer, no outsider, could ever have captured the naturalness of her subjects, but she was "part of it, born into it, taken for granted." From this unique vantage point, unseen as the fly upon the wall, Welty has

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been able to write about all that is neither typical nor taken for granted in the life of the South. Originality of both subject and technique has been her one constant.

So we look to this collection of essays, reviews, and personal pieces—many of which, like Welty herself, have appeared in out-of-the-way places—to see what it reveals about her artistic creed and affinities. And lo, in addition to her canny insight into the work of her peers and masters and her great gift for pinpointing a writer's inspiration for coming to writing at all, many of these studies seem to be as much about Eudora Welty as about anything else.

For instance, all that she has to say about the noise and commotion in the novels of Jane Austen (whom Welty named once as her favorite author)—“the family scene! The dinner parties, the walking parties, the dances, picnics, concerts, excursions”—immediately conjures up the excitement of Dabney Fairchild's wedding, Granny Vaughn's ninetieth birthday party, Judge McKelva's funeral. And of whom exactly is she speaking when she asks how the future will treat this spinster who, confined to the world of her father's country parsonage, “could never have got to know very much about life” and then, thinking of Austen's intimate relations with the gentry, goes on to wonder, “Will they wish to call her a snob?”

Welty has said elsewhere of Chekhov, “He had the sense of fate overtaking a way of life, and his Russian humor seems to me kin to the humor of a Southerner. It's the kind that lies mostly in character,” and it is through this prism of Welty's that we see Chekhov's reality. Aristocrats, kulaks, serfs, the Emancipation—all have a southern counterpart in the critic's mind.

When she illustrates an essay on Katherine Anne Porter (a longtime friend and an early supporter whose 1941 introduction to *Curtain of Green* is still one of the best essays around on the art of Eudora Welty) or on Willa Cather with a passage from one of their works that displays their insight into human character and their ability to crystallize transitory psychological states, we think to ourselves, Why, Welty herself could have written that! Her appreciation of Elizabeth Bowen's refined wit is an act of homage as well as of connoisseurship; her enthusiasm for the humor of S. J. Perelman makes one suspect that she may also have learned a trick or two here. While her high school peers, she confesses, “were studying ‘How long, O Catiline, must we endure your orations?’ I was taking in ‘‘Gad, Lucy, You're Magnificent!’’ Breathed the Great Painter’ ... from a copy of *Judge on my lap*,” and it is quite apparent from the bizarre, grotesque bits of humor that stud her stories, from her acute sense of the spoken language, and from her swift narrative pace that she had everything to gain by studying living American, rather than dead Latin, rhetoric.

Her respect for Faulkner goes without saying, but her awe of Virginia Woolf impresses us even more, because what Welty has gotten from her is so intangible. Yes, color and landscape from Faulkner, plot and irony from Austen, understatement from Chekhov, and so on down the seemingly endless list of Eudora Welty's accomplishments as a stylist. But it is Woolf who is her consummate artist, from whom she takes, I think, an entire attitude toward the act of writing. For Welty writes about Virginia Woolf as if she were an icon, a holy woman, a seeress of fiction.

If this were all there was to this volume—a series of touchstones for understanding Welty's stories—it would be quite enough. But as it happens, there is also a second dimension, another and more splendid gift from Welty to her readers. For in her studies of individual writers and in the more abstract section “On Writing”—which includes her defense of regional writing (“Place in Fiction”) and of Faulkner, “the white Mississippian” (“Must the Novelist Crusade?”)—she has made that dry art of criticism into a human, even moving practice. As critic, Welty is not lawgiver but friend and teacher. The words “feeling,” “passion,” “life,” “communication,” occur again and again in her attempts to lead her reader by the hand up to the books that have meant so much to her.

She explains at one point—referring most probably to the discovery of her own vocation—that “it's when reading begins to impress on us what degrees ... of communication are possible between novelists and ourselves as readers that we surmise what it has meant, can mean, to write novels.” *What it can mean to write novels*. This, it seems to me, is the real and very impassioned message behind all of Eudora Welty's criticism, and one that very few writers are in a position to transmit, because as she herself notes, story writing and critical analysis are entirely separate gifts, “like spelling and playing the flute.”

The problem of criticism is that the meaning of writing is inseparable from the act of writing. There can never be a translation of a whole story into a commentary on its parts in which the story does not suffer. Welty's solution to this paradox is to treat the story as an intimate communication of feeling between just two persons—the writer and the reader, each bound to the other for the duration of the story by the moral responsibility the intimacy implies.

But whether she is writing fiction or criticism, Welty never forgets to be entertaining. She's as lively and engaging a critic as ever lived, and this is just another mark of her shrewdness. *The Eye of the Story*, which belies its occasional posthaste into the hands of the young especially, for they are Eudora Welty's favorites, and also into the hands of serious readers and writers of all ages. ●

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## Books in Brief

### Dulles: A Biography of Eleanor, Allen, and John Foster Dulles and Their Family Network

by Leonard Mosley  
Dial/James Wade, 530 pp., \$12.95

Some political families thrive on public performance and elections, others, on private influence and the assignment of power. *Dulles* is the story of a family of the second kind, a family who dominated American foreign policy in the 1950s; whose taste for political authority united self-interest and morality; and whose mixed legacy haunts us still.

The three Dulles siblings (of five children) shared a lifelong devotion to diplomacy, but each expressed that devotion differently. John Foster was always the grave statesman: analytical and moralistic, possessing a shrewd sense of realpolitik and self-promotion. Allen was the adventurer: high-spirited, humane, a bon vivant and a congenial devotee of intrigue for its own sake. Eleanor was the thoroughgoing professional: Though curtailed in her diplomatic career because she was a woman, she remained hardworking, unpretentious, effective, and genuinely dedicated to advancing international equity and order.

Mosley unfolds the lives of these three gifted people and the implications of their personalities in the urgent, anecdotal manner of a novelist. There are some compelling sequences, especially those devoted to Allen's wartime cloak-and-dagger operations, but, alas, the subject deserves better than Mosley's breathless narrative. For besides plot, personality, and anecdote, politics involves ideology, and to this Mosley is blind. The cold war, in which Mosley's characters played the decisive roles of their lives, is simplistically explained here as Soviet hostility and American resistance. The Dulles family are thus cleansed of all ideological motives for their actions, a tactic that makes for a fast-paced story but not for history.

Yet, intellectual lapses aside, the book illuminates one dark passage in American political life: how Foster's untouchable authority at State protected Allen's romantic individualism at the CIA, granting the CIA a life and morality of its own and sanctioning an atmosphere of secrecy and conspiracy in government. This is the same atmosphere Allen so relished in espionage, in which "sometimes one

never knows until the day of judgment who, after all, is deceiving whom."

—JAMES SLOAN ALLEN

### Fifth Avenue: A Very Social History

by Kate Simon  
Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 371 pp., \$12.96

In her account of the glittering social events held at the Waldorf-Astoria around 1900, Kate Simon seems bemused by the wide-eyed curiosity seekers on the street, for whom such spectacles were "fantasies of the good life." In its own sophisticated way, however, Simon's book gawks dreamily at the same pedigreed world. Ambling up Fifth Avenue in a leisurely, neo-Proustian fashion, the author mixes elaborate architectural commentary with an unauthorized biography of nineteenth-century American nobility. The walking tour might just as well have been titled "A la recherche des maisons perdues," since many of the buildings Simon discusses have been gone as long as the various Whitneys and Astors who built them.

Furthermore, Simon's appetite for the intimate life of fashionable society—the scandalous opulence and the opulent scandals—is a little too prodigious for her own good. That Tiffany scornfully turned up its nose at Diamond Jim Brady's request for gold-plated, jewel-encrusted bicycles; that Mrs. William Kissam Vanderbilt di-

vorced her husband and subsequently became Mrs. Oliver H. P. Belmont; that Anna Gould married a French aristocrat who proceeded to squander \$11 million of her money on gambling and other women—all this may be of interest, but only to people for whom gossip is a valid form of history.

Then too, the gamiest anecdotes in the book are already well known to us from the works of John Dos Passos, E. L. Doctorow, and Stephen Birmingham, none of whom receives an acknowledgment. (The omission in Birmingham's case is particularly regrettable, since Simon's chapter on prominent Jewish American families follows *Our Crowd* as faithfully as an Irish terrier.)

The horror vacui to which Simon attributes the systematic overdecoration of so many of the buildings she describes must be contagious, for it infects her prose as well. From Washington Square all the way to Harlem, her inventory of ornate splendors continues unrelentingly in a style that is frequently corrupted by its subject. The following is typical: "The bar [was] decorated with twenty-five thousand dollars' worth of Bouguereau nymphs gamboling with satyrs and a Pan leaping with heated bacchantes in a spacious ambience of textured ceiling, cut glass, fancy pilaster and shining top hats." Densely packed and overripe, Simon's book about Fifth Avenue is an exhausting social history.

—ROBERT F. MOSS

